THE NEW FICTION

Friends in War and Work

HELEN OF THE OLD HOUSE. By Harold Bell Wright. D. Appleton & Co.

THE nine million readers of Harold Bell Wright—we take his publisher's figures—are witnesses to the universal need of the poet. Wright has not the gift of song, but the appeal of "Helen of the Old House" is the appeal of the Psalmist, of Spenser and of Whittier, underneath the form of their verse; for poetry goes deeper than form. The power of David and Dante is exerted even through prose translations. It is the intangible, invisible power of the spirit.

"Helen of the Old House" is not a great book, since the author's resources are limited. The works that are for all time are the fruit of as complex a harmony of powers, as miraculous a meeting of elements as those which make a strawberry or a mocking bird. But Wright has the poet's eye, with its heaven-to-earth and earth-to-heaven range. And many a word fancier might envy him that gift. He sees life as it eternally is, not as it seems to the overspecialized view of scientist or real estate expert.

The two young men, rich John Ward and poor Capt. Charlie Martin, with their David and Jonathan friendship, are enough to justify the book. They had been separated artificially, after childhood comradeship, by old Ward's rise. But fighting together in France had straightened things out for them both. Read the whole of their conversation, beginning on page 144, after the management of the mill has come into young Ward's hands. Here is a little of it:

"The new general manager smiled, but it was a rather serious smile. 'Do you remember how you felt when you received your Captain's commission?' he asked.

"'I do that,' returned Charlie. 'I felt that I had been handed a mighty big job and was scared stiff for fear I wouldn't be able to make good at it.'

"'Exactly,' returned John. 'And I'll never forget how I felt when they stepped you up the first time and left me out. And when you had climbed on up and Capt. Wheeler was killed and you received your commission, with me still stuck in the ranks—well, I never told you before, but I'll say now that I was the lonesomest, grouchiest, sorest man in the whole A. E. F. It seemed to me about then that being a private was the meanest, lowest, most no-account job on earth, and I was darned near deserting and letting the Germans win the war and be hanged.'

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"And then it appeared that John Ward had a very definite purpose in thus turning his comrade's mind to their army life in France. 'And you should have sense enough to understand that my promotion in the mill is not going to make any difference in our friendship. Your promotion was the result of an accident, Charlie, exactly as my position in the mill to-day is the result of an accident. Your superior officer happened to see you. I happen to be the son of Adam Ward. If I ought to have known then that your rank would make no difference in your feeling toward me, you have got to understand now that my position can make no difference in my feeling toward you.'

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"'Tell me, when Private Ward saluted Capt. Martin, as the regulations provide, was the action held by either the officer or the private to be a recognition of the superiority of Capt. Martin or the inferiority of Private Ward—was it?'

"'Not that any one could notice,' answered Charlie with a grin.

"'You bet your life it wasn't,' said John. 'Well, then, what was it that the salute recognized?'

"'Why, it was the Captain's rank.'

"'Exactly; and what determined that rank?'

"'The number of men he commanded.'

"'That's it!' cried John. 'The rank of the Captain represented the—the'—he searched for a word—'the *oneness* of all the men in his command. And so you see the thing that the individual private really saluted as superior to himself was the oneness of all his comrades, both privates and officers in the company.'

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"'But how will the people get it, John?'

"'I don't know how it will come. . . . We must as a nation learn, somehow, to feel our work as we felt our war. . . . We must learn to see our individual jobs in the industrial organizations of our country as we saw our places in the nation's army. . . . And the Big Idea will win again, old man, as it has always won; and the traitors and slackers and yellow dogs will be saved with the rest, I suppose, just as they always have been saved from themselves.'"

Wright may not live as a novelist or creator of character. But he serves his own anxious day when he brings truth like that home to millions.

Another thing. Wright is serving even the cause of literature, since many of his admirers never read any book at all before. And the simple habit of reading is something gained. Considered as fiction, such books as this have a kinship with the fairy tale beloved of the child mind. But some of these many readers will demand after a time a sounder psychology, a richer art. No doubt there are clever craftsmen who now exercise their wit on him that will yet owe readers to Harold Bell Wright.

A Dozen Stories About Londoners

THE THIRTEEN TRAVELLERS. By Hugh Walpole. George H. Doran Company.

THE thirteenth traveller, dear reader, is yourself; and the little journeys you are to make in the company of the other twelve will be mainly about London, with a central point in Hortons Chambers, a building of flats in the heart of the city, and that you know is near the Marble Arch and Charing Cross and Piccadilly and everything that is truly cockney. But do not imagine, if you have never been in London, that you will learn a great deal about these places by reading this book; you won't, for the author, whatever else he is is not a compiler of guide books.

And yet he may very well be called a writer of a guide to the hearts of his people. In the short chapters devoted to Fanny, Absalom Jay, Clive Torpy, Peter Westcott, The "Morgue," Mr. Nix, Lucy Moon, Lois Drake, none is so brief that you do not learn the essentials of character—about his life before and after Hortons, about his insides, his mainspring.

The prospect of acquiring so deep an insight into the souls of twelve passing travellers may not seem alluring. Ordinarily one listens to a strange travelling companion's account of himself with half an ear, and turns that half only because there is nothing else to do to kill that unresisting victim—time; but when this author makes himself responsible for such accounts one has, indeed, another story. With the exception of two Spiritualistic tales, thrown in, perhaps, to catch the prevailing taste, these unpretentious stories are fascinating. And they might have been so dull, as well as true to life!

With the background of Hortons, Walpole shows his very diverse characters in the changing years that follow the armistice, and upon all of them are seen the lights and shadows of the war. The war adds immensely to the weight of the sketches, which in some cases would be light as thistle down without. The effect on Lois Drake, for an instance, is shown with a strange mixture of comedy and tragedy. In this story the author reveals himself as one unafraid to call a spade a spade, but he doesn't decorate his front porch with a collection of these implements.

For he has taste as well as charm. Taste is a very good asset of a fiction writer and it can nowhere find a better place to shine than in a collection of short stories; we more easily forgive or overlook its absence on a big canvas. Taste prevails in "Lucy Moon," a temporary sojourner at Hortons. This charming and unusual story would leaven twelve heavier narratives than those marching through this charming book.

WILLIS STEELL.

The Book Factory

By EDWARD ANTHONY.

Impious Impressions.

6. ERNEST POOLE.

It's my opinion that he spends
Too many hours in meditation,
And not enough with jolly friends
Who specialize in cachinnation.

A sense of humor I demand
Of every one who novelizes;
If Poole would buy one (Clemens Brand)
He'd snatch off all the lit'ry prizes.

The man needs pleasure. I'm afraid
He's making of his home a schoolroom.
His study chamber should be made
Into a dance hall or a Poole room.

And after that I might propose
A cure at which no wise man sneezes:
A meeting with a sage who knows
The best and newest barroom wheezes.

7. GEORGE JEAN NATHAN.

Barry Lyndon, sword upheld,
Looking for a scrap.
Regiments the man has felled
With a single tap.

CHEKHOV.

The best collection of short stories we have seen in a long time is Anton Chekhov's "The Horse Stealers and Other Stories" (MacMillan). It furnishes further proof that this great Russian yarn spinner has an amazing range. Among the characters one finds in the twenty-two stories that make up this collection are horse thieves, doctors, hospital attendants, inn keepers, huntsmen, soldiers, peasants, gypsies, matchmakers, architects, lawyers, beggars, monks, bank managers, bookkeepers, mayors, governors, bishops, teachers, tax assessors, clerks, newspaper men, gunsmiths, actors, land owners, porters, authors and foresters. These we recall offhand—and most of them are masterfully presented.

If Chekhov could have managed to get in a prime minister, a barber, a revenue officer, a janitor and a commuter, he would have covered 98 per cent. of the interesting side of humanity. As it is, we can give him only a rating of 92 per cent., which is not so bad.

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Which reminds us that it wouldn't be a bad idea to require publishers to give a cast of characters (as has been done in a few instances) with each work of fiction they put on the market. It would help the bewildered reader to decide whether he wanted to buy or not. We, for one, always feel cheated when we discover, after buying a book, that it contains a lady detective. And when one of the characters is a rum soaked genius we feel positively robbed. Why not label books as other products are labelled? We submit a possibility:

This book contains one heroine with a past, one hero with a future, four sycophantic relatives, one father who doesn't understand his children, one dreamer with a vision, one neglected mother, one dynamic business man, and other dependable ingredients. The author's word pictures are guaranteed free from artificial coloring.

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But we digress. We were talking of Chekhov. Another thing we like about him is his merry cynicism. Any one—even we—can be cynical. There are few writers who know how to be mirthfully cynical. Chekhov does it beautifully. His cynicism is the chuckling unbelief of a man with an overpowering sense of humor. He understands human nature too well to expect too much of it. As an example of this we cite the joyously brazen "A Story Without a Title." In the hands of a less jovial sceptic this jolly story of a group of fifth century monks who learned one day what they were missing by confining their worldly activities to the borders of their monastery, might have become a piece of cheap cleverness. As it stands, we think it comes close to being a masterpiece.

Other excellent stories in the collection are "An Actor's End," "Old Age" and "The Horse Stealers." "Ward No. 6," the longest story in the volume, contains some good writing, but it becomes a bit tedious. Chekhov is at his best in the shorter form.

By the way, Constance Garnett deserves considerable credit for her able translations.

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THE REPETITIOUS BARD.

Ourselves must be our greatness; we alone,
Serene and strong amid despairing souls;
Ourselves must be our greatness; we alone,
Supreme and calm amid the clashing strife;
Ourselves must be our greatness; we alone,
Unvanquished though the world sink robed in fire!

—*From "Portraits and Poems to Marias" by Ralph Gordon (Stratford).*

Repeat until they understand you, Ralph,
Some folks are rather slow to comprehend;
Repeat until they understand you, Ralph,
Reiteration wakes the reader up;
Repeat until they understand you, Ralph,
I get you, but there may be some who don't.

A Merry Bandit of Many Disguises

THE GALLANT ROGUE. By Burton Kline. Little, Brown & Co.

MR. KLINE has constructed an interesting romance which is a cross between "The Three Musketeers" and the old romances of "Robin Hood," with a little bit of "The Tale of Two Cities" thrown in. His bandit, Conradin, has no Friar Tuck to add an element of comedy, but he is equipped with as many disguises as Nick Carter, and loyal comrades spring up in almost every place to help him out of his difficulties. He has as many hairbreadth escapes as any hero of Dumas, and like Dumas Mr. Kline concentrates all his energy in telling a story, but he also shows us the French Court gleaming like a tawdry candle against a sombre background of misery and oppression. It is a book so thrilling that it will be read through in one sitting.

An Error of Man and Woman's Faith

THE MASTER OF MAN. The Story of a Sin. By Hall Caine. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.

SINCE he wrote "The Deemster" and "The Manxman," a quarter century ago, Hall Caine has deepened and solidified the quality of his following. More serious even than Hardy—for Hardy had an honest laugh or two in some of his earlier novels—Hall Caine has been able to overthrow and live down even the aspersions of certain critics upon his pervasive solemnity of outlook. Mr. Gladstone early set the seal of his approval upon Hall Caine; it seemed, at the time, as if some spark of the same fire kindled in those two great souls. For Hall Caine took himself always—and his work, as part of himself—quite as seriously as Mr. Gladstone took himself, which is to say all possible. After a visit to Hawarden, where she saw Mr. Gladstone's several and separate writing tables for various periodicals to which he was an ardent contributor, an American woman journalist, on returning to Chicago, answered an inquirer thus: "Take himself seriously?" Why, my dear, he takes himself as seriously as God Almighty."

T. P. O'Connor said of him: "Hall Caine reaches heights attained by only the greatest masters of fiction." An awed newspaper reviewer once declared: "Hall Caine stands apart among his novelistic brethren, though reminding one somewhat of Victor Hugo." Of "The Woman Thou Gavest Me," the novel published eight years ago, the London *Daily Chronicle* said: "It strikes a great blow for righteousness, and in that light it is Hall Caine's greatest achievement." Which seems halting praise; Hall Caine has never done anything which did not strike a great blow for righteousness.

After this long interval, then, comes this novel of close to 175,000 words, an exposition of the man's side of "a story dealing with the eternal forces of life." "The Woman Thou Gavest Me" set forth the woman's side; and here is, as one may say, the obverse of that coin.

A young man of fine nature, of a family of high traditions, "sins against a woman," under unusual circumstances and great temptation, and conceals his sin, to the injury not only of the victim of his sudden, blind passion, but against his higher love for great-hearted Fenella Stanley." The great buttresses of idealism and romance in their natures are almost swept away in the storms of hatred and falsehood which engulf them. But finally the great hearted woman's faith prevails.

A strong, stern story told with all Hall Caine's mastery of his particular kind of art. It will be welcomed by many thousands of his faithful admirers and by all the circulating libraries.

NEW BOOKS

Fiction.

ERIK DORN—By Ben Hecht. Putnam.
MR. WADDINGTON OF WYCK—By May Sinclair. Macmillan.
THE SNOWSHOE TRAIL—By Edison Marshall. Little, Brown.
AND THE SPHINX SPOKE—By Paul Eldridge. Introduction by Benjamin de Casseres. Stratford.
THE NEW WORLD—By G. Murray Atkin. Crowell.
KIT MUSGRAVE'S LUCK—By Harold Bindloss. Stokes.
AN OFF-ISLANDER—By Florence Mary Bennett. Stratford.

Biography and Reminiscences.

MY BROTHER THEODORE ROOSEVELT—By Corinne Roosevelt Robinson. Scribner's.
JULIAN T. DAVIES—Memorial of a Leader of the Bar—By Joseph S. Auerbach. Harpers.

"Everyman's Library."

MOBY DICK; Or, THE WHITE WHALE—By Herman Melville. Dutton.
TYPEE: A NARRATIVE OF THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS—By Herman Melville. Dutton.
OMOO: A NARRATIVE OF ADVENTURES IN THE SOUTH SEAS—By Herman Melville. Dutton.

History and Public Affairs.

THE POLITICAL GITA OR THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE APPLIED TO POLITICS IN GENERAL AND INDIAN POLITICS IN PARTICULAR—By V. M. Shah. Published by the author. Ghat-kopar, Bombay, India.

Economics.

PROFIT SHARING BY AMERICAN EMPLOYEES: EXAMPLES FROM ENGLAND—TYPES IN FRANCE—A report of the Profit Sharing Department of the National Civic Federation. Dutton.

Domestic Science.

SUCCESSFUL FAMILY LIFE ON THE MODERATE INCOME, ITS FOUNDATION IN A FAIR START. The Man's Earnings. The Woman's Contribution. The Cooperation of the Community—By Mary Hinman Abel. Lippincott.

Essays.

BOOKS AND FOLKS—By Edward N. Teall. Putnams.

For Boys and Girls.

LITTLE FRIENDS IN FEATHERS—By Inez N. McFee. Barse & Hopkins.

Satire.

SYMPTOMS OF BEING 35—By Ring W. Lardner. Bobbs-Merrill.

Travel.

THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE—An enlarged edition of "The Peasantry of Palestine, Life, Manners and Customs of the Village."—By Elihu Grant. Lippincott.

Music and Drama.

OPERA SYNOPSES: A GUIDE TO THE PLOTS AND CHARACTERS OF THE STANDARD OPERAS—By J. Walker McSpadden. Crowell.
GARMENTS OF PRAISE: A MIRACLE CYCLE—By Florence Converse. Dutton.